

Ministry of Environment



Plan for 2014-15

Statement from the Minister



The Honourable
Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Environment

I am pleased to present the Ministry of Environment's Plan for 2014-15, which identifies strategies and key actions designed to deliver public service excellence in protecting the environment and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources to enhance economic and social benefits.

The Ministry manages our province's diverse landscapes and our renewable natural resources in a manner that supports a healthy environment, a growing economy and strong, vibrant communities.

The Government's Direction and Budget for 2014-15 are built on the principle of *Steady Growth* to support a continued focus on sound economic growth and shared prosperity.

The Ministry supports the vision, goals and priorities set out in the Saskatchewan Plan for Growth. As part of the government's vision for a strong and growing Saskatchewan with a high quality of life, the Ministry is committed to ensuring enhanced environmental protection by establishing and administering a regulatory framework that is timely and encourages innovation. Going above and beyond government's commitments in the Plan for Growth, the Ministry continues to make progress on delivering a results-based regulatory model - known as Results-Based Regulation (RBR) - to provide a greater emphasis on tangible results by government and to achieve desired environmental outcomes.

The Ministry also monitors and helps maintain healthy air, land, water and ecosystems that support native biological diversity. Further progress will be made in 2014-15 with stakeholders and partners in the Boreal Watershed Management Strategy which was established to assess and maintain the ecological integrity of Saskatchewan's northern watersheds.

In 2014-15, the Ministry will continue to focus on delivering responsive and responsible government by improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Ministry's programs and services. Core programs will be reviewed to ensure the best use of public funds, to streamline processes and to enhance services and information available to the public.

This new approach demonstrates the Ministry's commitment to modernizing government, and supports the ongoing competitiveness of Saskatchewan's economy by fostering innovation while delivering enhanced environmental protection and excellent client service.

The Ministry's progress towards this year's plan will be reflected in the 2014-15 Annual Report.

Response to Government Direction

The Government is committed to establishing Saskatchewan as the best place to live, work and raise a family.

In October 2013, the first progress report on the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth – Vision 2020 and Beyond* was released. Saskatchewan's growth is strong and steady. As Saskatchewan continues to move forward, the Government will support growth in 2014-15 through investing in people and needed infrastructure, encouraging economic growth, and through sound policy and financial decisions.

Saskatchewan's Vision

"... to be the best place in Canada – to live, to work, to start a business, to get an education, to raise a family and to build a life."

Sustaining growth and opportunities for Saskatchewan families

Meeting the challenges of growth

Securing a better quality of life for all Saskatchewan people

Delivering responsive and responsible government

Government's vision and four goals provide the framework for ministries, agencies and third parties to align their programs and services to these priorities and meet the needs of Saskatchewan's citizens.

All ministries and agencies will report on progress in their 2014-15 annual reports. This supports Government's commitment to keep its promises and ensures greater transparency and accountability to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mission, Strategies and Actions

Mission Statement

The Ministry of Environment provides public service excellence in protecting the environment and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources to enhance economic and social benefits.

A Healthy and Productive Environment

Strategy

Maximize economic benefits through the sustainable use of natural resources.

Key Actions

- Implement a results-based environmental regulatory model to improve protection of the environment;
- Participate in inter-governmental forums at the technical and policy development level to help ensure that environmental protection and resource management programming and requirements are current, consistent and defendable;
- Implement the Saskatchewan Environmental Code to promote innovative new tools and adopt best practices in environmental management for Saskatchewan and allow proponents to use alternative solutions and technologies for achieving compliance;
- Continue to seek service quality improvements that will increase efficiency and effectiveness in delivering environmental assessments in Saskatchewan;
- Implement a harvest plan for fish and wildlife that supports commercial and recreational use;
- Work with municipalities and stakeholders across the province to:
 - ↳ engage in activities for economic benefits while protecting and conserving natural resources;
 - ↳ provide operational assurances for protection of values at risk;
- Provide appropriate development and use opportunities on Crown resource lands through the review, approval and management of land use dispositions;
- Promote a sustainable and marketable forest sector through forestry management agreements; enterprise wide partnerships; allocation of wood fibre; diversification of forest products and services and encouraging the use of biomass;
- Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and increase our ability to respond to the impacts of climate change while accommodating economic growth, through promoting investment in low-carbon technologies and innovative solutions.

Strategy

The Ministry is committed to meeting the challenges of growth by supporting training and staff development and a regulatory environment that is timely, clear and encourages innovation.

Key Actions

- Provide appropriate development and use opportunities on Crown resource lands through open and transparent information exchange for the review, approval and management of land use dispositions;
- Evaluate staff capacity, succession planning and training to optimize delivery of Ministry programs and services;
- Implement the use of a Ministry safety management system to prevent and reduce workplace-related injury and illness;
- Provide effective protection for and maintain Boreal Caribou populations and habitat in the province; and,
- Develop a Multi-Species Action Plan for species at risk in southwest Saskatchewan.



Photo Credit: Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, Hans-Gerhard Pfaff, Downtown Regina

Strategy

Impacts on the environment are minimized.

Key Actions

- ↳ Ensure that development and industrial activity proceed in a manner that protects the environment and human health and safety through environmental assessment and management of industrial sites and compliance activities:
 - ↳ including protection of source water through the monitoring of industrial facilities and compliance programs;
- ↳ Maintain Saskatchewan's air quality through airshed management, monitoring, use of good quality data, partnerships and national programs;
- ↳ Ensure public safety by focusing wildfire suppression activity on protecting people as the highest priority through an aerial fleet renewal plan for better response to threats of wildfire; work with stakeholders to understand, prepare for, and take responsibility to protect themselves from the risks of wildfire in order to ensure the safety and security of people, communities and public and industry infrastructure;
- ↳ Ensure effective solid waste management via landfills, transfer stations and recycling programs;
- ↳ Ensure effective management of impacted sites and Hazmat response activities to minimize and reduce impacts to the environment;
- ↳ Ensure audit, compliance and enforcement of Saskatchewan Environmental Code, standards and legislation including partnerships with the Water Security Agency and Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport;
- ↳ Through enterprise approaches with other ministries and governments, protect the pristine waters of the northern boreal watersheds from the impacts of development through baseline assessment, monitoring for change and assessment of risks as well as establishing thresholds necessary for development;
- ↳ Continue to expand, protect and manage sites within the provincial Representative Areas Network;
- ↳ Facilitate land acquisition by Treaty Land Entitlement First Nations and First Nations with specific claim agreements;
- ↳ Maintain productive and biologically diverse forests through forest renewal and protection from invasive insects and diseases, such as the spread of mountain pine beetle from Alberta's lodge pole pine forests; and,
- ↳ Enforce conservation standards to protect fish and wildlife.

Strategy

The Ministry delivers excellence through services and programs that are effective, efficient and regularly evaluated.

Key Actions

- ↳ Continue to modernize environmental legislation and regulations;
- ↳ Monitor and evaluate federal regulation and recommended compliance standards including targets for GHG emissions and Aichi targets for biodiversity;
- ↳ Commitment where appropriate to active enterprise-wide collaboration on initiatives such as the Boreal Caribou initiative;
- ↳ Review, prepare and implement a modern Wildfire Management Act to better manage provincial wildfire activities;
- ↳ Identify and apply Lean principles leading to efficiencies in the delivery of Ministry services to eliminate duplication and delays with existing administrative processes;



Photo Credit: Ministry of Environment

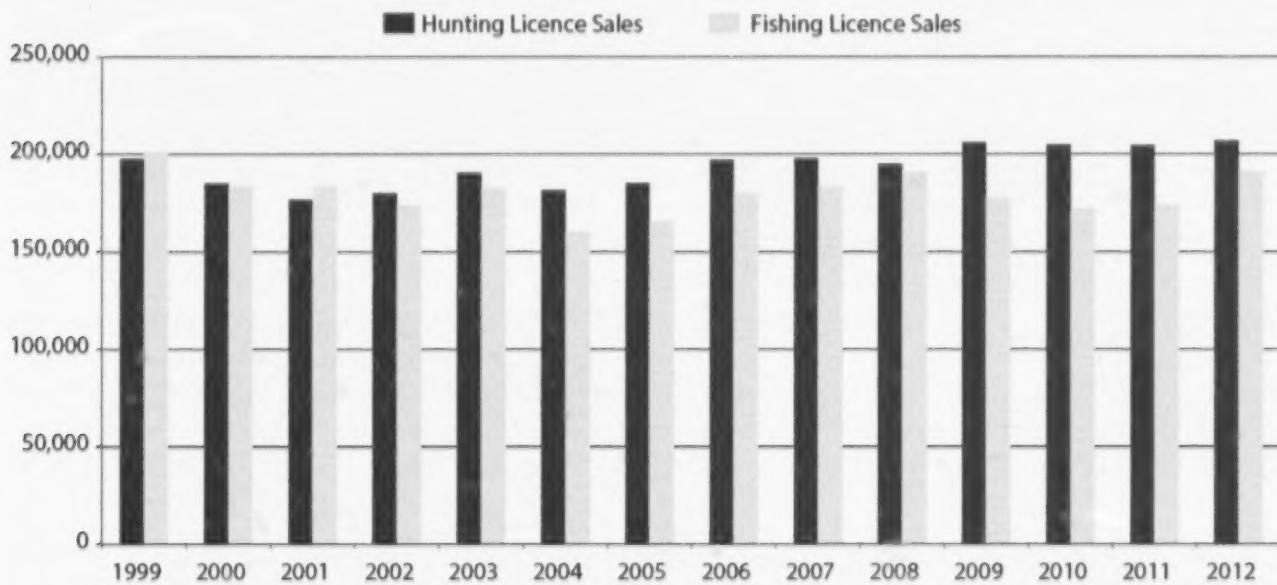
- Removal of regulatory overlap and elimination of unnecessary red tape while maintaining standards for safety and protection of the environment;
- Ensure technical and expert review for Ministry of Environment staff and clients to provide assistance in environmental monitoring and client data interpretation;
- Lead land use planning processes that inform development and resource allocation decisions that are supported by diverse stakeholder and user groups;
- Ensure and enhance Ministry client service presence through channels such as the Client Service Office, online portals, in-person and telephone service and develop customer service standards and measures to improve service in supporting the needs of individuals, rural and urban municipalities and businesses in Saskatchewan;
- Implement the use of a Customer Relations Management (CRM) software system to optimize service delivery in the Ministry's 44 field offices;
- Implement a forestry management fee structure, where appropriate, including timely and accurate collection of fees;
- Review core programs to ensure efficient and effective delivery;
- Develop and implement a communications and social media plan for engagement of Ministry stakeholders including Code deployment and client services;
- Continue to refine and improve client and public access to information including credible measurement, reporting and verification data on its website and online portal; and,
- Implement clear and effective processes towards fulfilling the Ministry's legal Duty to Consult with First Nations and Métis communities.

Performance Measures

The Ministry of Environment tracks and measures a number of indicators that reflect the full mandate of the Ministry. The Ministry's 2014-15 Plan highlights a few key measures that are used to provide a broad picture of Saskatchewan's environmental status and trends, and highlight ongoing efforts to manage the province's resources and conserve its natural heritage. The following are a few examples of those key measures used. Additional measures can be found in the Ministry's State of the Environment Report that provides the ability to trace the performance of legislation and policies, including programs and activities as it relates to the condition of our environment over time. The Ministry is currently developing measures to report on as it adopts a results-based regulatory system.

Measure

Number of hunting and angling licenses sold



Source: Ministry of Environment, Fish and Wildlife Branch

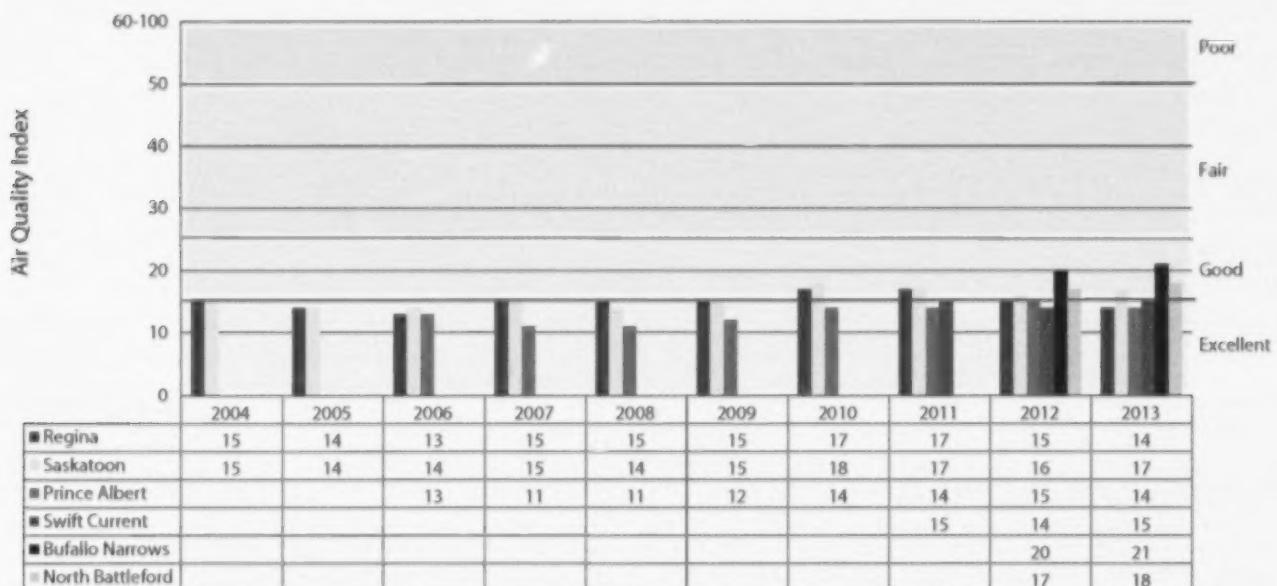
Measure Description

Hunting and angling are of social, cultural and economic importance in Saskatchewan. Licence sales are tracked annually and serve both as an indicator of short and long-term interest in these activities and as an indication of the importance of hunting and fishing to the economic health of the province. Measuring the number of licenses sold helps determine the priority areas for population assessments and to manage the competing interests of users. As such, this measure aligns with the Ministry's strategies of enhancing environmental protection and facilitating economic growth.

The Ministry has experienced high levels of participation in angling and hunting activities by members of the public in the past, which supports continued focus on wildlife and fisheries resources conservation and management. Moving forward, the Ministry will also begin tracking the number of fishing and angling licenses sold online to further improve its online services for the public.

Measure

Air Quality Index



Source: Ministry of Environment, Technical Resources Branch (also available online at www.environment.gov.sk.ca/airqualityindex)

Measure Description

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a communication tool designed to describe the general air quality in urban areas by transforming ambient measurements of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, carbon monoxide and particulates into a single number or descriptive term that represents the measured quality of the air. The index is also used to monitor long-term trends in air quality. Measuring and evaluating urban air quality is an important step in meeting the Ministry's objective of ensuring clean air. Maintaining air quality is fully aligned with the Ministry's strategies to enhance environmental protection and to improve transparency and accountability. This measure is an essential tool to monitor air quality trends and a basis for making rough comparisons in different urban areas.

Saskatchewan's overall approach to managing air quality is through: approvals issued pursuant to the Clean Air Act/Regulations and the Potash Refining Air Emissions Regulations; the environmental assessment process; air quality monitoring and reporting; ambient air quality standards; air dispersion modeling; air zone management; compliance and enforcement; communications and research.

The Ministry has also established air monitoring stations in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Swift Current, Buffalo Narrows and North Battleford. The AQIs for Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Swift Current, North Battleford and Buffalo Narrows have consistently rated as good to excellent and there has been a relatively stable trend in this measure. The slightly higher annual AQI at North Battleford and Buffalo Narrows is mostly due to higher background ozone (O₃) levels and higher particulate matter levels because of forest fires.



Photo Credit: Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, Greg Huszar Photography, Fishing on Jan Lake

The graph provides the AQI for those stations that are a part of the National Air Pollution Surveillance Program; however, data for all sites is available on the website at saskatchewan.ca/airqualityindex.

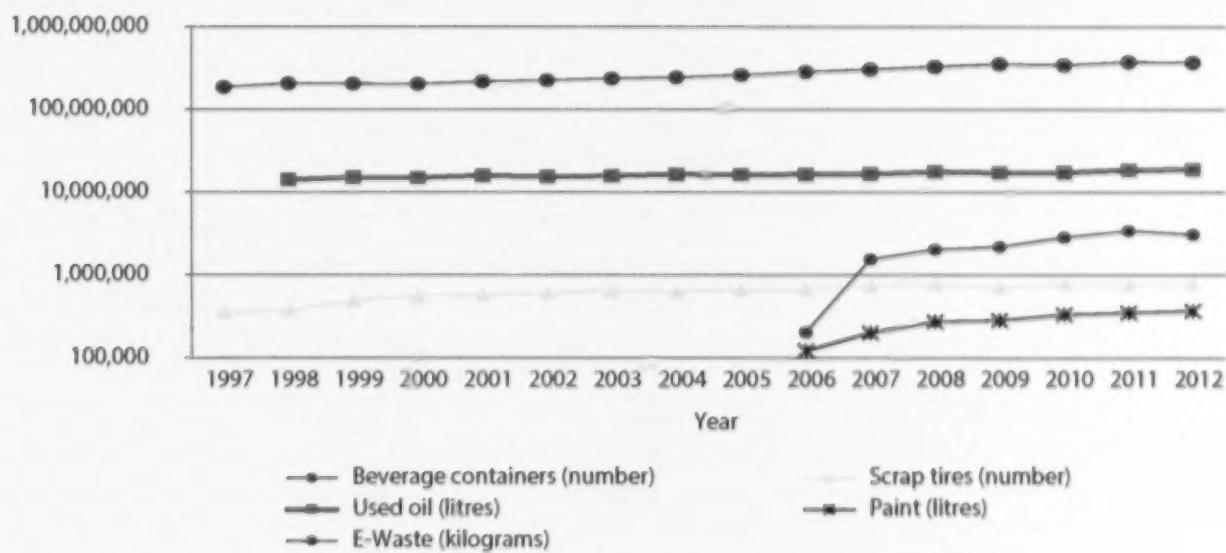
Provinces within Canada are making the transition to the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI), which has a greater focus on human health. The Ministry will be making the transition to an hourly AQHI but will continue using the annual AQI, as it is a better overall long-term performance measure of the state of the environment.



Photo Credit: Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, photo by Paul Austring, Buffalo Narrows

Measure

Recycling Rates



Sources: Third Party Organizations Annual Reports, except for beverage container data.

Notes: Beverage container and e-waste data are based on a fiscal year. The fiscal year 2008-09 is represented by 2008. All other data is based on a calendar year.

Measure Description

Recycling is an indicator of public commitment to waste minimization and indicates shared responsibility for environmental stewardship. The Ministry administers the enabling regulations for four industry-led stewardship programs and oversees a fifth program, the Beverage Container Collection and Recycling System, through a contract with SARCAN. The recycling indicators report on the actions of the Ministry of Environment and stewardship programs in preventing and reducing risks to the health of people and the environment, and key actions related to expanding solid waste management and recycling programs.

Market conditions, public commitment and good stewardship practices determine the recycling rates. The Ministry continues to promote recycling as a means to increase the recycling rates. The expansion of waste electronic products collected from the industrial, commercial and institutional sector and the Ministry's efforts to develop and implement a Multi-Material Recycling Program and Agriculture Plastics Recycling Program are expected to increase recycling rates in the future.

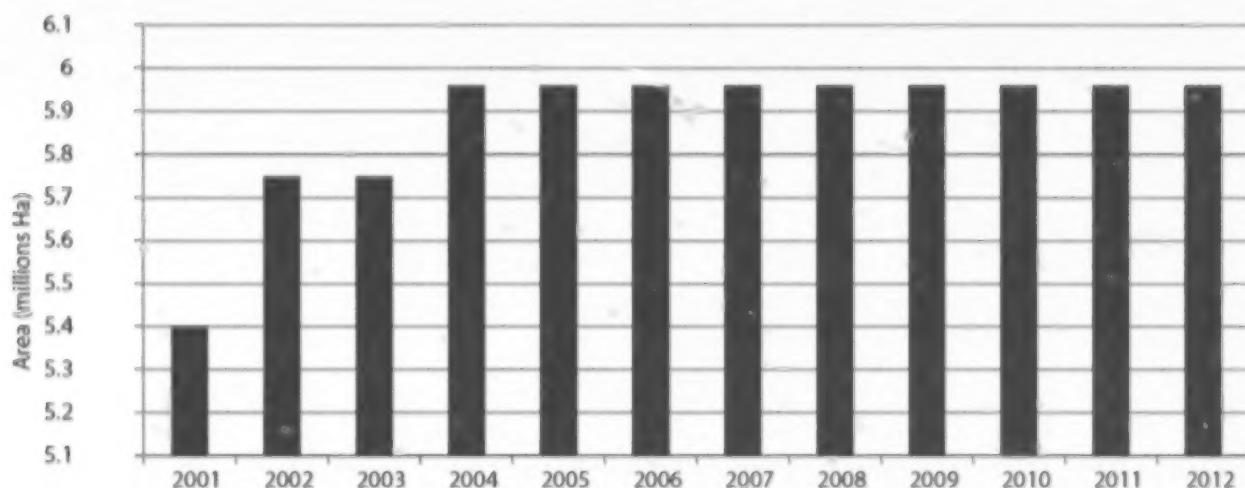
Key risks to achieving the measure include market conditions such as the value of recyclable materials and access to purchasers of recyclable materials, sufficient funding sources for recycling programs and sufficient public commitment as illustrated through participation in recycling efforts and support for recycling fees and levies.



Photo Credit: Jim Kroshus Wildlife Photography, Snow Geese in Flight

Measure

Number of hectares in the Representative Areas Network



Source: Ministry of Environment, Landscape Stewardship Branch

Measure Description

The Representative Areas Network (RAN) is intended to conserve a representative and unique landscapes throughout the 11 ecoregions of the province. The RAN includes designated Crown lands that have been given a level of protection by virtue of legislation and private lands that are managed for biodiversity by agreement. The measure of the number of hectares in the RAN is an indicator of the province's commitment to supporting the protection and retention of native habitat and of long-term ecological health and aligns with the key actions of maintaining a healthy and productive environment and minimizing impacts on the environment. Establishing protected areas is seen in the international science community as a "natural solution" and a powerful tool against carbon emissions and possibly climate change. RAN areas also serve to help maintain biodiversity and act as benchmarks when compared to managed landscapes.

There are challenges in adding significant numbers of hectares to the RAN. In agricultural portions of the province, the vast majority of land is privately held and additions to the RAN are achieved in small quantities. In northern Saskatchewan, even though Crown land dominates, many interests must be considered and weighed to achieve a balance between conservation and economic development.

The greatest risk to achieving the RAN targets are increasing development pressures and the resulting developments that either decrease the ecological value of the land or take up lands fully so that they are not representative of a natural landscape. As well, lack of support for protected areas by some users is a risk.

The number of hectares in the Representative Areas Network remains unchanged; however, a number of sites have been identified within integrated land use plans and, as these land use plans are approved and recommendations for designation of proposed representative areas are implemented, hectares will be added.

Financial Summary

2014-15 Estimates	(in thousands of dollars)
Central Management and Services	16,569
Climate Change	2,815
Landscape Stewardship	4,006
Environmental Support	3,253
Fish and Wildlife	10,429
Compliance and Field Services	17,030
Environmental Protection	41,110
Forest Services	12,319
Wildfire Management	54,074
Total Appropriation	161,605
Capital Asset Acquisitions	(6,520)
Non-Appropriated Expense Adjustment	9,061
Total Expense	164,146
FTE Complement	868.4

For more information, see the Budget Estimates at: <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/budget>

Ministry of Environment, Budget 2014-15

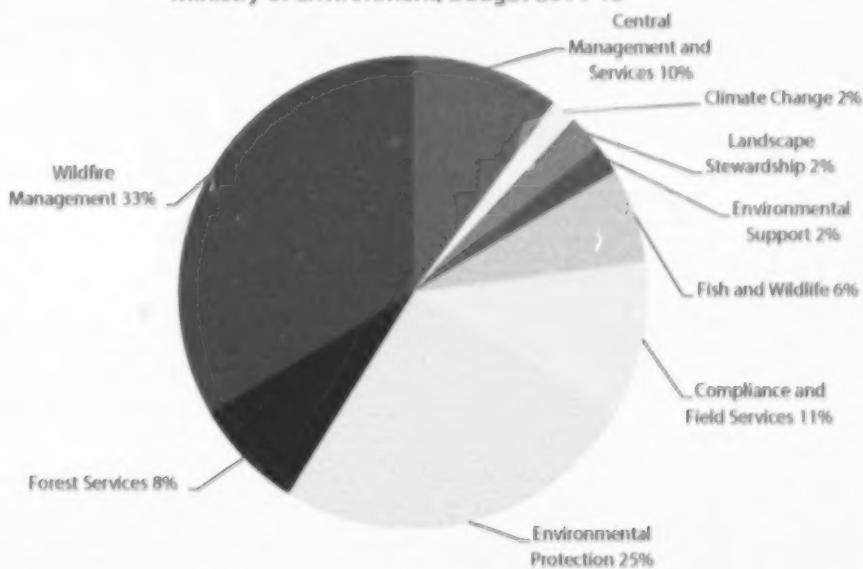


Photo Credit: Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, photo by Vicki East, Rafferty Reservoir

Highlights

2014-15 Budget Highlights:

- Investing in information technology is critical to the Ministry's transition to results-based regulation. The 2014-15 Budget includes \$4 million in capital funding to continue work on client-focused projects such as the application processing and permissions management system and the client relationship management system.
- The budget includes \$23.7 million for SARCAN to help support the operation of its Beverage Container Collection and Recycling Program.
- The 2014-15 Budget includes \$200 thousand to leverage federal funds and support the implementation of recovery measures scheduled to occur over three years as part of the South of the Divide (SOD) Action Plan.
- The 2014-15 Budget includes \$250 thousand to allow the Ministry to move forward with directed studies focused on building a better understanding of Boreal caribou populations and habitats for the development of federally prescribed range plans that will balance decisions on caribou conservation and northern development.
- The 2014-15 Budget includes \$500 thousand for infrastructure development to help communities prepare for the provincial Multi-Material Recycling Program, which will divert up to 40 per cent of waste from the province's landfills.
- In 2014-15, further progress will be made on the Boreal Water Management Strategy to assess and maintain the ecological integrity of northern watersheds. Over the past three years, \$3 million has been provided to monitor the ecosystem effects of development in northern Saskatchewan and the 2014-15 Budget includes \$1 million to continue this work.
- The 2014-15 Budget includes an increase of \$322 thousand to complete the transfer of responsibility for the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund (FWDF) to a more independent administrative and operational structure.
- The Ministry's 2014-15 Budget includes a total of \$1.25 million to complete site assessment work at five abandoned northern mine sites.

For More Information

Please visit the Ministry's website at <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/ministries/environment> for more information on the Ministry's programs and services.

Front Page Photo Credits

 Canola and flax fields Photographer, Charles Melnick	 Biking, Narrow Hills Provincial Park Greg Huszar Photography	 Over the Hill Orchards Greg Huszar Photography	 Saskatchewan Legislative Building Greg Huszar Photography
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